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Summary: Success at both work and love enhance each other. The necessary negotiation and communication skills lead to success in both the bedroom and the boardroom. One of the most important skills involves keeping promises, especially the commitment to oneself that comes with the power of a positive "No." One also needs external feedback to really Know Thyself. It is possible to create an effective and dignified work family integration if not balance. Specific "must" suggestions are offered by the author, an executive, family and divorce coach.

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Men and Women *can* have Success at *both* Love and Work[©]

Part 2: What You *Must* Do!

By Shel J. Miller, Ph.D.

For the most part, the same habit shifts (mood, attitude, and skills) that improve family life also enhance work performance. The solution is direct person-to-person dialogue with one's work or home partners. Always turn to simple dialogue before trying the latest complicated fad (involving major organizational restructuring) from a high-powered consultant (not talking about me, of course). Talk to each other with positive language. Don't await the effect of the latest miracle drug either. Trust your ability to self-disclose and receive the intimate concerns of the other in kind. You could turn to another software or Internet-based training system to improve your "leadership competencies" --- *if* you prefer dialogue with computers. But then you can't kiss a computer system.

Allow yourselves the luxury of 5 minutes of daily, private conversation. At work, we call it strategic planning: one says "no" to less pressing realities in order to say "yes" to immediate needs. If frustrated, overwhelmed, or lonely, peacefully express feelings (knowing they are simply your and only your perception of reality). Take responsibility for your impact on the other rather than responding with defensiveness or blame. Stay focused on the priority issues that need resolution. Discuss one issue at a time without such over-generalizations as "You always do that!" or "You never fix the web site in a timely manner!" Remember your focus on long-term relationship building: on what's **strong, rather than wrong**. In fact, true dialogue or task completion requires listening so objectively that you

hear *without memory*. You may have to don an imaginary muzzle of forbearance if it will help you discard your immediate negative thoughts before mouthing them and creating more conflict. Sometimes, you impulsive sorts will benefit greatly from hanging a real muzzle on your fridge or file cabinet as a reminder. You will need to talk about specific behaviors and make very clear, specific requests when negotiating. For everyone wants to feel powerful and too often “right.” Let go of using “no” simply as a hammer, in order to win every power struggle. Maintaining a positive, nonchalant demeanor is very hard! Sometimes you must give up power in order to attain intimacy. Moreover, if you want to demonstrate and invite intimacy, be the last person to break off eye contact. Convey caring by the quality of the attention you give. So, give with your eyes, as well as your ears! Give with your heart and soul! Calmly review the decisions you made about who is responsible for what in running the home, parenting the children and covering for each other when away at work, especially when travelling. Often, one partner may be overly responsible—a caretaker who can not say “no” and who organizes and maintains a nurturing home life, while sacrificing personal work goals. This system often emerges without discussion or negotiation. One simply remains loyal to a prevalent pattern witnessed in and vaguely remembered from one’s own families of origin. The prior generation may have included a dual-career family in which a “super mom” held *two* full-time jobs when you include the home organizer and main parenting roles. Only Superwoman says “yes” to all.

How might you say “no,” you still ask? Delegate tasks that you do not want to do such as: the housekeeping, and running errands to that concierge. Then precious time saved might be devoted to strengthening family Interaction, understanding, and joy. Sometimes it is difficult to find someone to help with home chores. In that case, get thee to a coach to improve your skills in making effective requests for help. Many know less than they think about competent request making. You can make as many requests as you like as long as you accept the fact that the other party is entitled to say “no.” If one partner really can not listen to the other at the moment, be sure to offer to make an appointment for another time. That way your partner will feel emotionally visible. You will finally have a plan to find

out what each other really wants or needs. The alternative is the kind of deteriorating relationship depicted in the film “Mr. & Mrs. Bridge” where India Bridge (played by Joanne Woodward) waits until her first born is ready to leave home before addressing her husband (played by real life husband Paul Newman):

“No one could go through their whole life (on love and self-sacrifice) without some kind of appreciation. And most of the time you don’t seem to know whether I am dead or alive. ...Sometimes I think you think more of your secretary than you do of me....I’m getting a divorce. I’ve made up my mind.” Slow on the uptake, Mr. Bridge simply cracks bad jokes until he finally gets the gravity of the situation. The audience sees how many women friends help the Mrs. think through her dilemmas. Rarely does the husband share his own concerns with male friends.

End isolation. If necessary, find a nurturing set of surrogate parents in the community. Organize a fun and constructive leaderless couples group. Discuss relationship issues with that reference group of other trustworthy couples. Address needs for peer support at work with colleagues. Likewise, address home needs for peer support through friends. One couple so focused on work and child raising demands that they cut themselves off from friends. Therefore they were too overwhelmed and burned out to talk with each other. Notice how so many women create book groups where they discuss so much more than the book. Such groups often provide the opportunity to blow off steam. Years ago it used to be sewing circles. Having experienced empathy from your women friends, you are in a better position to create those meaningful 5-minute dialogues with your spouse. Men need men’s groups, of course, as well. At work, one may alleviate loneliness at the top via a mastermind group. Involve other titans of industry in your group in the spirit of Napoleon Hill to “think and grow rich.” Practice saying a firm “no” without guilt and balancing being a nice guy with knowing how to set boundaries and take good care of oneself. That could be a topic of conversation at any of these group settings. So one needs the understanding support both of other couples and of

individual friends and have work peers to develop one's personal sense of self. *Then* you will naturally negotiate a better, (though never perfect), work - family integration.

Another technique is self-observation. Yes, I am serious here. Allow yourself to see yourself as others see you. Tape-record your own conversation for later review and discussion. Impressed by one's own high decibel level in declining a request - only after listening to taped review of oneself - one may choose to accelerate personal change rather than getting stuck in the role of victim of **the other's** behavior. One man in a couple *finally* saw that his wife had reason to be intimated when he saw for the first time how he presented himself to her on videotape play back. She had been complaining to him for years that he looked angry. Before, he would always deny the anger.

Unfortunately, many otherwise ambitious folks would rather not know what they do not know. Even you, the reader, would rather not know what you do not know. However, if you are to accept all kinds of minds and cultural influences in others at work, you must develop empathy for yourself and for others as well. You cannot coach your subordinates, if you are too busy judging -standing *over* - them rather than *understanding* them and how they differ from you in temperament. If you are facing leftover pain from home, you really need a coach or mentor to help you maintain a positive frame of mind at work. Find a sophisticated coach who will videotape you and insist, that is sweetly convince, you to see yourself the way others do when you watch the tape on playback.

The option remains, of course, to continue as Dr. Turn-on one day and Mr./Mrs. Turn-off on another, until you compromise both your work and home functioning. For the mood you have upon awakening is the one that can stay with you all day long. (Need proof? Then keep a diary for a few days of what you sense and feel the minute you get up). Why not create new possibilities for hope and pride in both work and family life? Remember during our courtships, so many of our friends and relatives were offering advice and opinions?

Just as "it takes a village to raise a child," it takes a community to maintain a marriage, a family, and a career. In summary:

- Delegate tasks while you engage in compassionate and appreciative relationships with others.
- Improve your competence evaluating specific requests in relation to your carefully crafted goals.
- Nurture yourself with experiences you find nourishing such as massage, yoga, and romantic weekends away.
- Nurture your loved ones with surprises – something you know they would love to have or do – a special book, a dinner out, a time away from child care responsibilities.
- Navigate formerly hidden emotional vulnerabilities (problems saying "no", or dealing with conflict without needless guilt) by talking with an executive or marital coach, religious advisor, or trusted friend.
- Increase self-awareness and effective dialogue by listening to the tone of your own voice and listening carefully to others with the kind of attention that increases your awareness of what they need and want. Provide that whenever you can. Say "No" to the rest.
- Continue to get new feedback from friends and spouse and give the same creatively and generously

Capitalize (respond positively to what was just said) upon hearing your life partners' good news– living interdependently *at work and at home*.

Saying "yes" to others through servant leadership blossoms at work and home simultaneously. Be the best person you can grow to be in all situations. Practice the habits described above and you will enjoy a model of first class cooperation and communication.

This emotionally relationship-smart leader is the true mastermind and most effective communicator. He moves beyond personal ambition to create a model for teamwork, accepts responsibility and has “response ability -- the ability to respond to and to know when to support or

say “no” to the emotional needs of those around him. Remember there are mutual ripple effects of kindness, including loving anger, at home and at work. Both venues need sensitive leadership that focuses on love as the killer app.¹ The “lovecat,” explains Tim Sanders, displays his values by sharing knowledge, displaying integrity and expressing himself honestly and with care to everyone in his network. He also shares that network with others as much as possible. We measure those values by the limits you have set by the end of the day.

Resolving the problems discussed above may require **professional** help, such as marriage or family counseling or partnership coaching at work. Nancy Reagan, of course, knew this other part of the *full* story, beyond the ad campaign “just say, ‘No’” i.e. that we *all need help to be able to say no*. Let others help you **“Know”** thyself! Then you will know *how* to say “no” with integrity and in a positive manner -- so you can “Just say Yes” to life. Act *now!* Time waits for no one.

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¹ The idea of the “lovecat” is that of Tim Sanders in “Love is the Killer App: how to win business and influence friends,” New York: Crown Business, c2002.